

# **Climate Resistance**

**Surpassing Mass Movements**

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It is not an exaggeration to say the effectiveness of the climate movement to tackle ecological breakdown will affect the ecology of the planet and human survival for the next thousands of years. This crisis furthermore offers proof that capitalism is madness and makes transparent the role of state apparatus to those who have never been confronted with its brutal reality

These are fertile conditions for the rise of individuals and movements to radically transform society and destroy patterns of exploitation and domination in every aspect of life. However, we are facing crucial challenges of organizing, the role of insurgency and target setting even with the rise of environmental mass movements. This piece of writing goes out to activists amidst the mass movements, in hope of catching attention and raising urgent points for consideration regarding the success and methods of those movements.

We have thankfully seen a rise in mass demonstrations, but also in those mass demonstrations asking other groups with similar goals not to execute actions in parallel, continuing the legacy of environmental movements attempting to be 'apolitical' and being afraid of appearing too 'radical'. We have seen a rise in non-violent civil disobedience, but one which is heavily based on a misrepresentation of history regarding Martin Luther King and Gandhi, and an awkward understanding of self-sacrifice.

We have also witnessed the rise of climate camps and mass actions across Europe to attempting to effectively shut down big polluters, flexing incredible organizational and logistical skill. However, in certain aspects and moments these actions are affected by the same public image doubts as mass movements are having and are by some activists used as a yearly one-off good deed next to their regular life.

Shouldn't strength in numbers boost our confidence and enable us to stop tip-toeing around officials and performing symbolic action? Do thousands of fellow rebels not also mean thousands of open homes, hideouts and support networks? Shouldn't civil disobedience defy laws to demonstrate the futility of those laws and delegitimize authority in order to pinpoint its shortcomings? If this is the view we take, why should participants assume legal consequences and extradite themselves to the mercy of this unjust system.

The climate resistance has grown immensely, however, this new layer of mass demonstration and action turns out to be more conformist to the skeletons of this broken system than anticipated.

## **How could we attempt organizing differently?**

A great deal of organizing being done follows two premises. One is the need to organize effective groups before taking action and even before having a set target. This ambition often involves setting an action consensus, hosting obligatory meetings and open social events. It removes much spontaneity from the process and excludes potential informal participants who do not wish to fully enlist.

The other is groups growing exponentially reaching for NGO-like structures to consolidate their existence in this world. Mass mobilization can inspire actors to enter the oppressive power structure in hope of 'changing it from within', however this is how resistance is recuperated into new forms of authority and incapacitated in its ability to act against said authoritarian structures. This has been seen for many decades in new rising political parties with ambitious goals normalizing and compromising into conservativeness (e.g. the Green Party in Germany).

These are often done in favor of recruiting more conservative parts of society that do not know how to interact with any other any other form of empowered change-making outside of 'democratic' norms, but this piece of writing is not about how we can hope to gain mass participation. The majority of our energy should not be put into organizing ourselves so that we are more efficient in organizing ourselves (which is self-perpetuating and meaningless), but into moving forwards to our shared goals. The practices named above will happen either way, I am arguing what to do instead, as an individual finding oneself in this dilemma of choices.

Let us build up independent affinity groups, "which are able to associate themselves according to shared perspectives and of concrete projects of struggle" (Hourriya, No. 2). Groups that can pop up and be effective, and that are able to silently disappear when their time has come without damaging the struggle. Groups that are able to challenge these mass movements and their participants, and push them forward, to take a stance and to show colours. Groups that are able to exit and enter society seamlessly and build up spaces of resistance inside and outside of it.

Let us use anonymity to sustain longer lasting insurgent efforts and not let action consensus limit the affection and solidarity we offer our fellow rebels. Let us publish guides on starting affinity groups independent of mass movements and securely share where we can start acting.

## **What we're facing: "Politics is a continuation of war by other means" (*Foucault*)**

We live in a world of permanent conflict and of permanent repression within our own societies, our own homes, our workplaces. The state uses and incites this relation to enforce its power over our private lives and control over the matters we want to change as greater society, from simple aviation fuel taxation and plastic bans to the complex destruction of the synthetic fertilizer agro-industry and the transformation into a sustainable human society. The state only willingly makes changes when it reinforces its power.

This applies both in our European context and in the context of Indigenous resistance, although we experience it quite differently. For Indigenous communities, paraphrasing a member of Indigenous resistance to LNG terminals in so-called Texas (US), the fracking companies invading their lands is a continuation of genocidal violence that occupying forces have committed for more than 500 years. It is both a crime we are complicit in born into the Global North, even as activists, and a variety of this infinite-growth based, colonial governance we are victims of ourselves in the countries we choose to live in. Everyday life is violence and there is a constant on-going repression to keep the status quo intact, which we need to challenge and weaken to make the changes we want to achieve.

Both non-violence and violence have to be used as a strategy and tool, rather than a way to separate ourselves from the other. Quite the opposite is currently happening: non-violent mass movements are alienating smaller groups and other forms of action in order to gain traction and affinity with state apparatuses (e.g. holding good rapport with police and state agencies to hold legal demonstrations without repression, achieving press appointments with political leaders, parliamentary party support) and the general public (e.g. recruiting more members, less hate comments).

Being violently arrested by a police officer during a non-violent road block (see *sitzenbleiben!* in Hamburg <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjrTl5axqYA>) and shouting 'fuck cops' is appar-

ently already a breach of Extinction Rebellions action consensus and drives them to withdraw words of solidarity due to disrespect towards the police officers. This is absolute madness. When we are talking about counterinsurgency, this is what is meant: this behavior by a mass movement facilitates repression and legitimizes the monopoly on violence of the state. At the end of the day such actions from mass movements helps the state control the rebellion by dividing and conquering.

The cruel road behind this dynamic is paved by leading counterinsurgency theorist and co-author of the United States Army Field Manual, Dr David Kilcullen. He defines counterinsurgency as ‘a competition with the insurgent for the right and the ability to win the hearts, minds, and acquiescence of the population’. Further, Kilcullen defines ‘hearts’ as ‘persuading people their best interests are served by your success’ and ‘minds’ means ‘convincing them that you can protect them, and that resisting you is pointless’. He states the importance of ‘targeted social and economic programs’, later describing counterinsurgency as ‘armed social work’, viewing NGOs as allies who ‘need to preserve their neutrality’. (*“Permanent War: Grids, Boomerangs, and Counterinsurgency”* by Dunlap, Alexander)

And just the same as Kilcullen regards NGOs, we have to regard these mass movements as targets of counterinsurgent takeovers. There is no neutrality and objectivity in this struggle, efforts by capital and state cannot be regarded as equal to gain mass appeal without recuperation and instrumentalization by said institutions. Us and the people in power, the corporate actors and the police; we are not ‘in the same boat’. We are not all going to somehow suffer equally from the climate catastrophe, not even in the West.

## **What are we actually fighting for and against?**

Too often climate movements are merely asking the state to take matters seriously and act, so therefore actions by those groups will not be aimed at deconstructing state authority. There are demands for more regulations to be put in place, more laws, more scientific research and investment into so-called renewable energy sources.

Isn’t the core of these demands what has brought us into this predicament of driving life on Earth into extinction? Our collective dependency on laws and top-down solutions, on progress as betterment of conditions, scientific research as absolute truth and the cold quantification of nature. Paradoxically, movements often demand ‘System Change, not Climate Change’ – what does that mean? And if we cannot name what we are working towards, which is sensible as we have no collective past or identity outside of capitalism yet, then let’s name what we want to criticize and destroy.

Some activists claim that the state will wake up and understand that they cannot lie to the people any longer, that they have to come to reason, because else ... we take back the power! (and most likely have a new election). However, the truth has forever been interpreted by the ones in power. Suggesting that the state and corporations will wake up to the ‘lies’ they’ve been pulling off for decades is naive as their ‘truth’ and intention has always been to do whatever necessary to maintain the status quo and exploit the planet and inhabitants for utmost profit.

We have to abandon the idea that green energy solutions are a simple way out of this catastrophe. The invention, construction and maintenance of such industrial scale technology requires a network of fossil fuel driven industry and military operation all around the globe and is based

on neo-colonialist resource extraction and land occupation. ‘Renewables’ are nothing more than ‘Fossil-Fuel-Plus’ (*quote Alexander Dunlap*). Nowadays, you can find mining companies with their own wind parks and multinational corporations greening their footprints by producing their own energy. We will see more sabotage on wind turbines, solar farms and damming projects, and we should understand why this is happening.

The question is, how are we actually going to assume the positive sides of ‘renewables’ while under current power structures and our mad energy consumption? Simply put, we are not. We have to see these issues as interlinked.

## How will we move forward?

A social theory on the process of insurgency (*1971s Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, and Peace Keeping by British Brigadier General Frank Kitson*) divides it into three phases: the preparatory period, the non-violent phase, and insurgency. During each of these the state, capital and other actors try to implement a variety of counterinsurgency methods to halt escalation. We are currently, according to this framework, in the non-violent phase and we can see how acceptance of the movement by different actors and attempts to redirect and confuse efforts of organization and escalation are interfering with our productive rage and our impression of what is achievable. (we can observe e.g. the Green New Deal, complicated legislation scheduled for mid-term future, ‘sustainable capitalism’, corporate ‘green technology’, announcing state of climate emergency, police forces being ‘nice’ to non-violent protesters etc.)

We need to increase the escalation to overcome these obstacles and drive individuals in these mass movements to position themselves. This means such things as:

- Ceasing cooperation with state institutions (therefore delegitimizing its authority)
- Using more secure networks of communication and organizing
- At times risking losing public support
- Using violence / non-violence strategically, simultaneously and non-dogmatically
- Removing ourselves partially from mass movement structures and empowering ourselves as affinity groups
- Learning how to bridge gaps between anarchists and other rebels
- Looking beyond technology and growth solutions
- Calling into question the legitimacy of human domination over nature
- Practicing lawlessness and questioning authorities in more and more aspects of our lives (including the police)
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Opposing fascist organizing (believe me, they are better prepared to seize government if the system crumbles than we are to destroy said power)

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Opposing the military (especially its resource consumption and seizure of resources) and renewed rise in militarization (arming of police forces, armored vehicles, crowd control and surveillance methods)

The possibilities for action and insurgency are infinite, this is barely a list of what comes to mind and we have to brave the impossible: changing everything we can, holding on to what makes us strong and destroying the rest. "In the next couple of decades, we are going to have to work it out as we go, and it will be messy." (David King)

## **Recommendation for further reading:**

Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization (by Christopher Manes)

Hourriya: Affinity and Informal Organization

<https://hourriya.noblogs.org/post/2016/10/19/n-2-affinity-and-informal-organization/>

Dealing with Distractions: Confronting Green Capitalism in Copenhagen and Beyond

<https://dealingwithdistractions.wordpress.com/>

The fallacy of climate activism (by Adam Sacks)

<https://grist.org/article/2009-08-23-the-fallacy-of-climate-activism/>

Organizing Against Climate Catastrophe (by Paul Messersmith-Glavin)

<http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/paul-messersmith-glavin-organizing-against-climate-catastrophe>

Normalising corporate counterinsurgency: Engineering consent, managing resistance and greening destruction around the Hambach coal mine and beyond (by Alexander Dunlap)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0962629817300835?via%3Dihub>

Permanent War: Grids, Boomerangs, and Counterinsurgency (by Alexander Dunlap)

[https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/sites/default/files/as22.2\\_04dunlap.pdf](https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/sites/default/files/as22.2_04dunlap.pdf)

Desert (by Anonymous)

<http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-desert>

Road Raging - Top Tips for Wrecking Roadbuilding

<http://www.eco-action.org/rr/ch12.html>

Be Gay, Do Crime (by Mary Nardini Gang)

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/mary-nardini-gang-be-gay-do-crime>

Deep Adaptation (by Jem Bendell)

<https://www.lifeworth.com/deepadaptation.pdf>

The False Promise of Green Technology (by Anonymous)

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-the-false-promise-of-green-technology>

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